

Artist Resources – Donald Judd (American, 1928-1994)



Judd, 1992
Photography: Leo Holub

[The Judd Foundation](#)

[Judd at MoMA](#)

“Painting and sculpture have become set forms. A fair amount of their meaning isn’t credible. The use of three dimensions isn’t the use of a given form...three dimensions are most a space to move into.” Judd wrote in his seminal [1964 essay, “Specific Objects.”](#) “Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors – which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European Art.”

The Smithsonian Archives of American Art discussed Abstract Expressionism and the confines of art movements and painting as a medium in a 1965 [oral history](#) with Judd. “Usually, when someone says a thing is too simple, they’re saying that certain familiar things aren’t there, and they’re seeing a couple things that are left, which they count as a couple, that’s all, “ he explains. “But actually there may be several new things to which they aren’t paying attention. These may be quite complex... They may be read all at once... It has to have a wholeness to it.”

In the 1970s, Judd moved to Marfa, Texas, [transforming the Route 67 outpost into a creative mecca](#) through the sculptural and architectural enhancement of public buildings, disused warehouses, and barren plots of land, now memorialized by Judd’s [Chinati Foundation](#).

[Judd spoke with filmmaker Regina Wyrwoll](#) in 1993 about his love of architecture, projects in Marfa, and the differences between creative pursuits. “It’s important to maintain the difference between art and architecture. Art is done in a different way and for a different purpose – very much for the purpose of the individual... Architecture can be quite individual and ultimately creative, but it cannot be in opposition to the function of the building.”

Since 1996, two years after their father’s passing, Judd’s son and daughter – Flavin and Rainer – have overseen his legacy through the Judd Foundation, exhibitions, and maintaining his properties. [Interview Magazine](#) spoke with Flavin in 2016 in conjunction with the publication of a collection of Judd’s [art criticism and essays](#), followed in 2019 with a collection of [interviews](#). In 2016, Flavin and Rainer [opened up](#) about their childhood and how Judd’s creative spark influenced their lives.

[The Tate Modern](#) hosted the first major retrospective of Judd’s late sculptures, and the first to trace his career until his death, in 2004. Take [a digital tour](#) of the ten galleries.

In 2018, the [Institute of Contemporary Art Miami](#) brought together 14 rarely exhibited paintings, never before displayed together, which trace Judd’s transition from figuration to abstraction before he began his sculpture practice.

MoMA’s 2020 online retrospective, [Judd](#) is accompanied by an abundance of digital resources including Judd’s writing and reflections from contemporary artist on his legacy. [Watch a video chat](#) between the curator and Judd’s son Flavin.



Judd in New York studio, 1970
Photography: Paul Katz

Donald Judd (American, 1928-94)

Untitled, 1987

Anodized aluminum and blue Plexiglas

Private Collection; L2020:118.3

Sculptor, painter, designer, architect, and art critic Donald Judd developed his creative passions through an education in philosophy and art history at Columbia University and courses in painting at the Art Students League after serving in the US Army in 1946 and 1947. Judd entered the art world as a painter and author, embellishing canvases and writing reviews for journals throughout the country until the mid 1960s. Though writing remained a substantial facet of his creative practice, three-dimensional objects and space captured the artist's focus as he developed an aesthetic theory around artworks that transcend traditional forms of painting and sculpture, which he called "specific objects." As the artist-designer of these objects, Judd generated the forms and assigned the physical production to industrial sheet metal fabricators. Wall mounted works such as **Untitled** illustrate Judd's sensitivity to form, space, and the aesthetic function of symmetry. "The primacy of symmetry in art and architecture is not very definitive or restrictive because there are so many kinds," he wrote in 1985. "Absolute symmetry is marvelous and it's also marvelous when symmetry itself allows variation, when the logic of the situation causes or allows an approach to symmetry."

On view March 10 – June 13, 2021





Donald Judd (American, 1928-94)

Untitled, 1993

Brass and green Plexiglas

Private Collection; L2019:144.1

Remembered as a leader of Minimalism and one of the most important figures in post-war American art, Donald Judd began his career as a painter and art critic. In the early 1960s he began to make what he termed “specific objects,” art works that were neither paintings nor traditional sculptures as they had been previously known. These critical early pieces were often composed of identical three-dimensional units such as rectangles and squares, which he placed on the floor or attached to a wall. Each piece was industrially fabricated based on Judd’s designs – Bernstein Brothers Sheet Metal Specialties, Inc. was his choice firm – and frequently arranged by assistants rather than Judd himself.

Untitled, from the artist’s *Stacks* series, demonstrates Judd’s characteristic simplification of shape, volume, and color in an effort to avoid illusionistic space and reference to the natural world. Judd intended his stacks to activate the viewer’s spatial awareness, blurring the line between three-dimensional sculptures, traditionally visible in the round, and two-dimensional paintings attached to a wall. Judd used this method throughout his career, urging viewers to consider sculpture and environment as an integrated whole. As he explained, “The space surrounding my work is critical to it: as much thought has gone into the installation as into a piece itself.”

On view June 25 – January 3, 2021

Donald Judd (American, 1928-94)

Untitled, 1988

Anodized aluminum and yellow acrylic sheets

Private Collection; L2021:73.2

With a background as an art critic and philosopher, Donald Judd became a key theoretician of Minimalism in the 1960s. Though the artist vehemently opposed the term “minimalism,” his work came to embody minimalist themes of repetition, serialization, and geometric structures that now define the movement in American sculpture. Judd sought to make art that could not be labeled “painting” or “sculpture,” instead defining his works as “specific objects.” **Untitled**, with its colored Plexiglass and shiny anodized aluminum, is an exploration of light and space constructed from standardized industrial materials according to the artist’s precise specifications and design. To Judd, this not a sculpture *about* anything. It is a simple stack of specific objects in six variations.

On view June 16 – September 19, 2021

